WATCH FOR NEW

PLANT PESTS

the NUN MOTH

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • PA-634

The Nun Moth

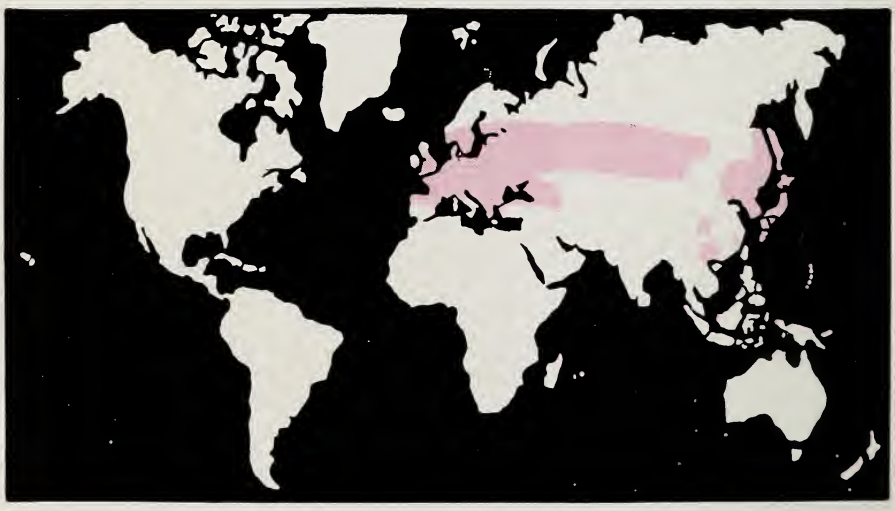
The nun moth*[1] *is not known to occur in the United States. It may get in. If it does, and if it becomes established, it may cause severe damage to our forest and shade trees. Watch for this insect and for any other insects you do not recognize. Report them promptly so they may be identified, controlled, and possibly eradicated.

The nun moth is a serious pest of coniferous and deciduous trees. Its damage often equals or exceeds that of the gypsy moth.

In the early 1920's, this pest attacked the forests of Czechoslovakia. It infested an area of 1,400,000 acres, entirely defoliated the trees in 262,000 acres, and caused forest losses that ran into millions of dollars. It also defoliated apple trees and pear trees.

This insect occurs throughout central Europe, extending south to Spain, west to Great Britain, and north to Sweden and Finland. Eastward, the nun moth extends through European parts of the U.S.S.R. into Siberia. In Czechoslovakia, outbreaks generally take place at intervals of 7 to 10 years and last 5 to 7 years. Outbreaks in Germany usually are checked by a

[1] *Lymantria monacha* L.; family: Lymantriidae.



Geographic distribution of the nun moth. Red areas indicate parts of the world where this pest occurs.

Tree defoliated by the nun moth.

virus disease, and last only 3 or 4 years. In Asia the pest occurs in Turkey, Japan, Korea, and parts of China and Tibet.

The nun moth attacks a wide range of trees including fir, maple, alder, birch, hazelnut, beech, ash, larch, apple, spruce, pine, poplar, plum, cherry, pear, oak, buckthorn, willow, mountain-ash, linden, and elm.

If this pest were to become established in the United States, it could severely damage our deciduous trees. By defoliation, it could mar the beauty of our forests. *Every precaution must be taken to keep it out.*

DESCRIPTION OF INSECT

The larva is a caterpillar about 1 inch long. It is brown, and has a spot of mixed black, blue, and white coloring on the second segment. The adult is a moth. Its forewings are white, and carry a pattern of strong, notched, black lines. The hindwings are grayish white, and have a fringe flecked with black. The abdomen is reddish, and has black bands. Wingspread is about 1½ inches in males, and slightly over 2 inches in females..

DESCRIPTION OF DAMAGE

Damage is caused only by the larvae, which usually hatch in late April or early May from overwintering eggs. The larvae feed for periods of 50 to 65 days on the foliage of trees. Heavy feeding defoliates the trees.

Top, *adult male of the nun moth;* center, *larva;* bottom, *adult female. Enlarged.*

THE PLANT PEST PROBLEM

At least half of our most destructive insects entered the United States from other countries, many before the Plant Quarantine Act of 1912 was passed. Today, thousands of plant pests are intercepted at our borders by plant quarantine inspectors, but some of them still gain entry.

When a new pest is detected, organized efforts are exerted to (1) pinpoint the areas where it has become established, (2) set up a quarantine to prevent spread, and (3) control the pest and eradicate it if possible. The sooner a new pest is detected, the better is the chance of controlling or eradicating it before it does serious damage.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Read the description of the nun moth and its larva; study the illustrations on the preceding pages. Then read the list of forest and shade trees this pest feeds on. If you should see large numbers of larvae feeding on any of these trees—particularly if they are larvae you have never seen before—they may be larvae of the nun moth.

If you find moths or larvae that resemble those described here, or that you do not recognize, send specimens to your nearest agricultural official. Mail them in a small bottle containing rubbing alcohol. Include a note giving your name and address, and telling where the specimens were found and on what trees. Do not send live specimens. If your local agricultural official does not recognize the specimens, he will send them to the proper authorities for identification.

Prepared by
Plant Pest Control Division
Agricultural Research Service

Washington, D.C. Issued June 1965

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C., 20402 - Price 10 cents.
U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 16—78733-1